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Housekeepers' Chat

Release Wednesday, January 2, 1929.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Buying Sheets and Pillow Slips." Approved by Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A. Menu and recipe from Bureau.

Bulletin available: "Selection of Cotton Fabrics."

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This is the month when many a bride-to-be will take advantage of the white sales, and buy her sheets and pillow cases. The modern girl hasn't time to hem wide sheets, and make pillow cases, by hand. Besides, it scarcely pays, nowadays, to buy the goods by the yard, and hem it yourself -- there isn't much difference in price.

A year ago, more than a hundred women were asked what they considered first, in buying sheets. The answer was: "Durability." Perhaps the young bride-to-be would appreciate a few suggestions, by which she can tell the wearing qualities of sheets.

When you select your sheets this month, see first whether the material feels firm. If it does feel firm, is it because the sheeting is of good quality, with threads closely woven, or is it because the sheeting is full of starch, or some other dressing, which makes it look firm? Here's the test: Rub the material between your hands, to see if the firmness vanishes; also, notice whether the rubbing has loosened a fine white powder, which is the starch, or dressing used. A sheet that contains no excess dressing is said by the trade to be a "pure finish" sheet. Look for this on a label, or ask the clerk to show you "pure finish" sheets. Notice whether the spaces between the threads are the same, or larger than before.

Notice next the size and smoothness of the yarns, by following a certain thread with your eye, to see if the thread is the same even size, or is large and thin, by turns. Next, look at the warp and the filling threads. The warp threads run lengthwise, parallel to the selvage. There are usually more warp than filling threads; but if there is a very great difference, it's quite likely that the direction having fewer threads would split first.

You may feel sure that the sheeting is of high quality, if, when stretched tightly between the hands, the threads are even, and closely woven, with no knots evident.

It is now possible to buy sheets with the same width hems, top and bottom. This insures longer wear, since the sheet can be reversed. Another point, while on the subject of hems---remember that some sheets are torn for hemming, and some are cut. If the sheet has been cut, it probably won't have a straight hem, after it's laundered: torn hems will be straight, of course, if they are ironed properly. If the sheet has a torn end, the fact is usually marked on the label. There's another way to tell whether the hem end has been torn or cut -- if the edge follows along very nearly the same thread, the end has probably been torn.

Besides durability, there's another important point to consider, when buying sheets. That is size. Sheets that are too short, or too narrow, do not give the greatest service in comfort. They are bound to be an annoyance, a disappointment, and poor economy.

Opinions differ on the amount of sheeting to be tucked in on each side, and at top and bottom. Miss Rosamond Cook, clothing specialist of the University of Cincinnati, recommends at least fourteen inches for turning under on each side, and from fourteen to eighteen inches at each end, for tucking in top and bottom. This means that a sheet should be at least twenty-eight inches wider than the mattress, and from twenty-eight to thirty-six inches longer. A sheet turned down eighteen inches over the top of the blanket protects the blanket from contact with the face and hands, and from the effects of sneezing and coughing. Blankets often irritate the face and hands; this irritation can be eliminated by using sheets that are long enough to keep the surface of the blanket removed.

We haven't said much about pillow cases; since they are made from the same material as sheets, they are judged in much the same manner. Ready-made pillow-cases are usually made from material woven in a tube, so that seams along the sides are avoided. If you make pillow cases at home, of flat material instead of tubing, be careful to have the length of the sheet follow the strong warp thread -- which is the thread parallel with the selvage. Both sheets and pillow cases come with plain, hemstitched, or scalloped ends. Plain hems wear best. Scalloped ends require most care in ironing.

Here's a question which fits in today's program: "When buying household linens, such as towels, and so forth, is it advisable to buy those marked seconds?"

There are seconds in all fabrics; some are good bargains, and some are not. All good mills have an inspection department, and every piece of material is carefully examined, before it is sent out. Sometimes there are pulled places, or unsightly knots, which make the material a little less valuable. This material is sold as seconds. If women are wise enough to choose well, they can often get a good piece of material, at quite a saving. But be sure to look at every inch, carefully, and see just how badly damaged it is. The cloth is apt to wear through, if there

are bad knots in the yarn, or the damaged places may come just where there will be the most wear on the towel. In such cases it may be better to pay a little more, and not be disappointed. Some of the stores always label the seconds they sell; others merely put them on bargain tables, and the buyer must be alert enough to look the fabric over carefully.

There is one bulletin in the Bureau of Home Economics which I have not mentioned for some time; it is called "Selection of Cotton Fabrics." This bulletin is illustrated, and will be of value to the woman who wants to learn something about how different materials are constructed, and how to choose them for durability.

Now we come to the ever-present problem: "What shall we have for dinner?" It should be easily solved today -- with the good food left from the New Year's dinner. The main dish may be cold roast turkey, ham, or whatever meat graced the table yesterday; our vegetables may be carrots and celery cooked together, using left-overs of celery which wouldn't be enough to serve alone. Our second vegetable might be buttered asparagus on toast. Then we need a little cranberry jelly, or relish, and a dessert.

Let's have a salad, instead of a regular dessert, today -- a pear and cheese salad, with French dressing. Won't this be a welcome change from rich desserts? Make the salad of canned pears, drained, and placed on lettuce. Sprinkle some grated American cheese on the pears, and add the French dressing.

Perhaps you'd like to write the menu: Cold Meat; Carrots and Celery cooked together; Buttered Asparagus on Toast; Cranberry Jelly, or Relish; and Pear and Cheese Salad with French Dressing.

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